

## SUBMISSION TO SECRETARIAT OF THE MINAMATA CONVENTION

### Submission by an NGO in the United Republic of Tanzania – AGENDA for Environment and Responsible Development (AGENDA)

- For several years, even before the endorsement of the Minamata Convention in 2013, AGENDA has been carrying out awareness and advocacy in phasing down mercury use in the health sector, among other sectors. It has played a role in promoting the use of mercury-free dental filling materials as well as discouraging the use of dental amalgam in healthcare facilities in Tanzania. The major achievement was in January 2020, where the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children endorsed the National Guidelines titled “**Second guidelines for provision of oral health services in Tanzania**”. Specifically, on page 17; the guidelines present the amalgam phase down plan, which intends to phase out amalgam use for all women of child-bearing age and children; and that is expected to be achieved by 2023.

The process of developing the guidelines involved:

#### a) **Facilitating meetings and workshops during the development of the national guidelines**

AGENDA facilitated and participated in meetings and workshops that were conducted between June 2017 to January 2020 to develop the national guidelines. AGENDA worked with other members of a Task Force, composed of government departments, NGOs, CSOs, and Academia. The list of Task Force included Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children; Vice Presidents Office – Division of Environment; Tanzania Dental Association; Dental School of the Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences; AGENDA (NGO); Envirocare (NGO) and Tanzania Consumer Advocacy Society (CSO). The adopted guidelines were developed through consensus.

The guidelines will be implemented under eight (8) Key Result Areas (KRA). Relevant to this submission are:

- The fourth KRA of the guidelines which is to perform restorative care using mercury-free dental materials for women of child-bearing age and children and that is expected to be achieved by 2023.
- The fifth KRA states: Environmentally friendly dentistry provided at all levels. It is discouraging the disposal of clinic waste containing amalgam, acrylic and polymers in the incinerators since are likely to cause pollution to the environment, hence human health impact.

The endorsement of the guidelines indicates clearly that the mercury-free dental fillings are available and have been in use in Tanzania for years.

The Task Force was very helpful in the development of the guidelines and information materials. For example, it participated in the designing fact sheets in the national language (Kiswahili) indicating the availability of mercury-free dental filling materials in dental clinics. Also, the fact sheets indicate the advantages and disadvantages of dental filling materials including Composite Resin, Glass Ionomer and Dental Amalgam.

**b) Public awareness**

In addition to the above, AGENDA has been disseminating information to public to enhance their awareness on the availability of mercury-free dental filling materials, among other issues.

**Note:**

This submission has been made by AGENDA for Environment and Responsible Development (AGENDA), an NGO based in the United Republic of Tanzania.

The submission of the guidelines to the Secretariat will be made by the Ministry of health, following the procedures therein.